

Family History DOCUMENTATION

Comparison of Pioneer to Modern Transportation

Document or Source of Information

Age Date

Fact

UNITED STATES

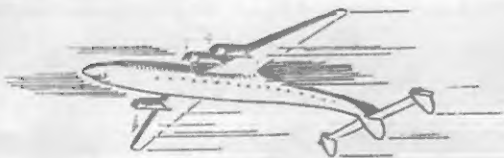
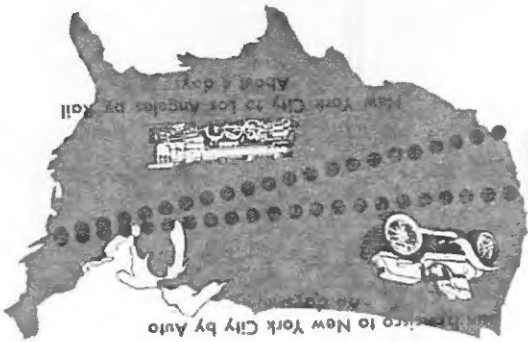
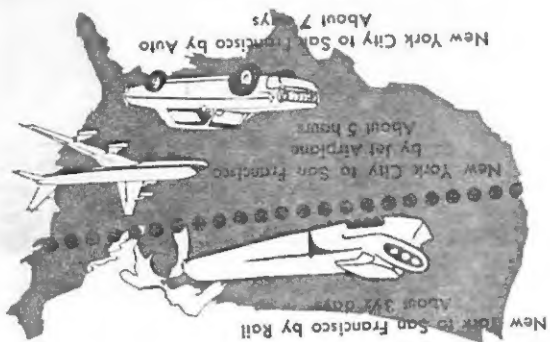
CROSSING THE

EARLY 1900'S

1800'S

TODAY

319



7 hours

We can fly across our country by nonstop airplane in --

Today



7 days

The same distance was traveled by the first transcontinental train in --

1869

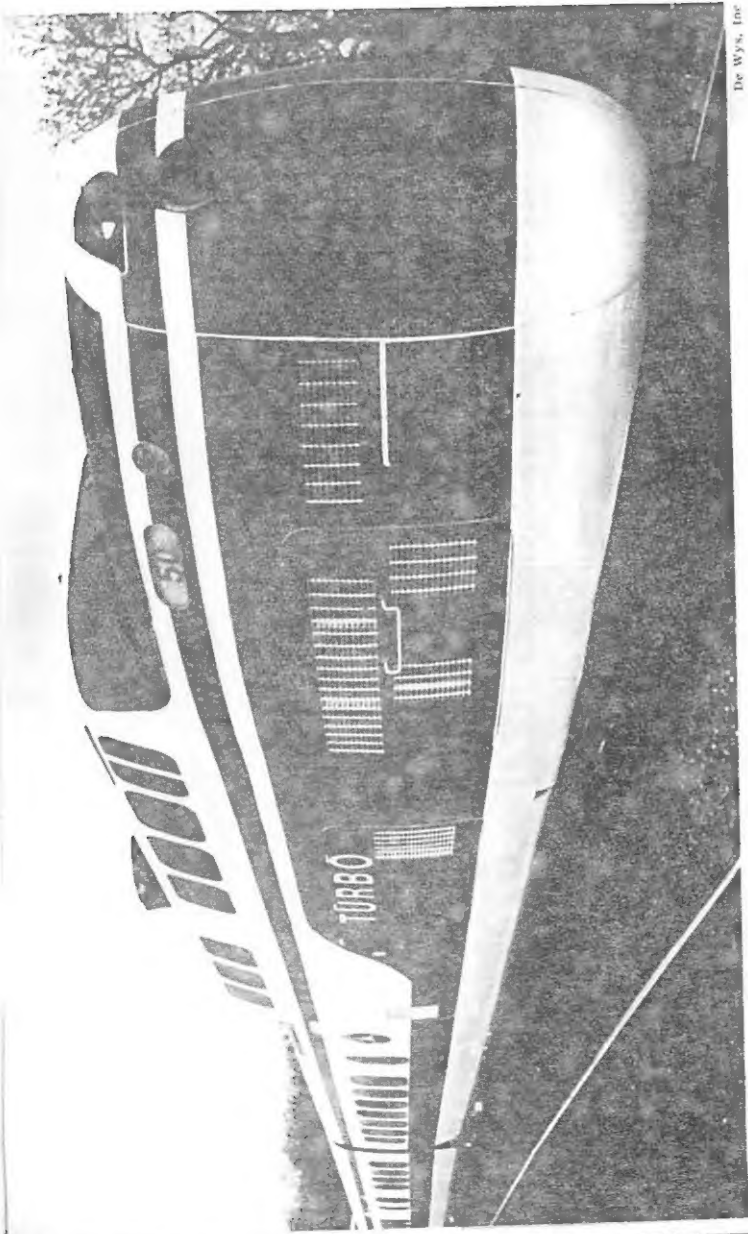


29 days

A traveler could cross the United States by railroad and stagecoach in --

1856

Faster ways of travel have made our country seem smaller



De Wys, Inc.

Sleek Passenger Trains speed travelers between major cities in many parts of the world. The turbo train, above, reaches speeds up to 100 miles (160 kilometers) per hour. Trains once carried most of the passenger traffic between cities. But today, more people travel by automobile or airplane than by train. Railroads in most countries now get most of their income from hauling freight.

RAILROAD

RAILROAD is one of man's most important means of transportation. Every day, thousands of trains speed along railroad tracks throughout the world. Some trains carry passengers. Others haul coal, grain, lumber, machinery, and other products on which people depend. Only airplanes provide a faster means of public transportation than do railroads. And only ships carry heavier cargoes for longer distances. The fastest passenger trains reach speeds of over 130 miles per hour (mph), or 200 kilometers per hour (kph). A freight train can haul thousands of tons of goods across a continent.

Railroads use a two-rail track to guide trains of cars along a permanent route. Trains therefore are not steered, unlike airplanes, automobiles, and ships. Powerful diesel-electric or electric locomotives move most trains along the track. But older steam locomotives still haul trains in many parts of the world.

Almost every country has at least one railroad. Some railroad lines extend only a short distance. The world's longest rail line is in Russia. It extends about 5,600 miles (9,010 kilometers) and connects Moscow and Vladivostok. Laid end to end, the tracks of the world's main railroad routes would stretch nearly 750,000 miles.

Gas Welty, the contributor of this article, is Senior Editor of the trade journal Railway Age. The article was critically reviewed by John H. White, Curator, Division of Transportation, National Museum of History and Technology.

(1,210,000 kilometers)—more than three times the distance from the earth to the moon.

The word *railroad* refers not only to a method of transportation but also to the organizations that provide rail transportation. In most countries, the central government owns all or most of the railroads. A government agency or government-owned corporation operates these railroads. In the United States, private companies own and operate almost all railroads. One of Canada's two major railroads is government owned. A private company owns the other.

The first public railroads began in England in the 1820's and 1830's. They used steam engines to haul wagons loaded with freight or coaches loaded with passengers. By the mid-1800's, other countries also had steam-powered railroads. During the late 1800's and early 1900's, thousands of steam trains pulled their way across the U.S. countryside, carrying most of the nation's freight and long-distance passengers. The first railroad across western North America was completed in 1869 and so helped open the American West to settlers.

Over the years, railroads have faced ever-increasing competition from other forms of transportation. Today, few railroads earn enough money to pay all their expenses. In most countries, the central government supports the railroads. But U.S. railroads receive little aid from the government. By the early 1970's, a number of U.S. railroads were in serious financial difficulty.